

ERIE-NIAGARA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP
INSTITUTE FOR LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND REGIONAL GROWTH
UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO
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Hon. Clyde Burmaster
Hon. Barry Weinstein, MD

May 6, 2005

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Rick Chase, Executive Director of Hydro Relicensing
New York Power Authority
Albany Office
30 South Pearl Street
Albany, NY 12207-3425

Mr. Chase:

This letter is to inform you that the Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership (ENRP), in a unanimous vote of its membership, urges you to support City of Buffalo Mayor Anthony Masiello's proposal to include annual funding for cultural agencies in the city and Erie County's power relicensing settlement agreement. Further, we urge you to expand the scope of said funding to become truly regional by including cultural organizations from Niagara County as well.

ENRP, founded in 1998 as an ad hoc subcommittee of the Niagara and Erie County Legislatures, works in partnership with the public, private, and non-profit sectors on bi-county collaborations in the fields of economic development, tourism & culture, transportation, and government affairs.

Ad Hoc:

Michael Casale
Hon. George Holt, Jr.
Hon. William Ross
John Sheffer, II
Lawrence Witul

Cultural tourism has been identified as an emerging economic sector in the two counties by the region's economic development professionals in a draft Regional Economic Development Strategy. This sector can only be successful, however, if the attractions themselves can sustain themselves in the short term and work to strengthen themselves in terms of visitor readiness, marketing, and related areas. This means investment in facilities, programming, and the development and implementation of professional marketing and fundraising strategies.

Administrator:

Tod A. Kniazuk

Embarking on such a multi-year, multi-faceted endeavor is all but impossible in the absence of a reliable, repeated, and secure funding source to allow these cultural organizations to realize their full potential. The inclusion of funding for the culturals in the relicensing settlement can be that source.

The Regional Economic Development Strategy – and countless other studies – further points to quality of life as one of the key elements of attracting progressive businesses and workers. This, in turn, attracts progressive economic development. Again, the region's cultural organizations are a cornerstone in this scenario.

Finally, it must be mentioned that the two counties' cultural organizations provide employment, provide a strong return on their investment, are run in most cases as some of the "leanest" operations in existence while still being successful, provide educational opportunities increasingly not found in our schools, and of course enrich us all through their artistic missions. For all those reasons, we believe providing settlement funds for the cultural agencies in Niagara and Erie Counties is a wise investment.

If you have any questions or need further information, please call ENRP's administrator, Tod Kniazuk, at (716) 829-2591 or via e-mail at tkniazuk@buffalo.edu Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Hon. Clyde Burmaster
Co-Chair

Hon. Barry Weinstein, MD
Co-Chair